

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**February 12, 2018 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

### **Smyrna Rest Stop**

#### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Kevin McAllister called the meeting to order at 9:39 a.m.

#### **II. ROLL CALL:**

Kevin McAllister (Chair), Blake Roberts (Member), Patricia Burrell (DVI/VR), Amy Layfield (DVI/VR), Deb Bradl (DVI), Elisha Jenkins (Director), Darryl Garner (Member), Jacqueline Poquette (Member), Jill Morrison (DVI), Suzanne Howell (Member), Sonya Lawrence (Member), Grisel Espinosa (DVI), Lisa Edmondson (DVI)

#### **III. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS VRAC MEETING:**

Mr. McAllister sent out the minutes for the January 8, 2018 meeting. Mr. Darryl Garner moved to accept minutes. Ms. Jacqueline Poquette seconded the motion. Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted. It was noted by Mr. Darryl Garner that acronyms and numbers need spaces in between in order for JAWS to read them correctly.

#### IV. **OLD BUSINESS:**

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA): Rebooted program. Consumers are confused as to whether or not they completed the CSNA. Mr. McAllister will receive a link to upgraded questions. Mr. McAllister suggested making all questions mandatory as well as making some of the questions lists with text box for feedback. Also, asking the right the questions that allow for feedback and making sure JAWS can read the questions. Determine intentions of CSNA. VRAC will reach out to interest groups by phone so that a focus group can be formed. Reach out to other demographics such as the Veterans Administration, Amish community, Native American community and parents. The general VR CSNA is complete. All support groups through Blindsight should be contacted for feedback.

Retreat: There has been a lot of conversation and activity around this event. Potential dates are March 16 & 17, 2018 or March 23 & 24, 2018. Currently looking to hone in on a venue and timing for the event. Elisha Jenkins will contact the School for the Deaf and Edge Hill Shopping Center to see if they have a space available for the event. Good opportunity to connect with people who may not be in the focus group. Do a focus group at public meeting. There was a discussion about finding funding for overnight stays for members. Is there a funding stream available for

this? Council members were asked if they are willing to use alternate forms of transportation to get to and from the retreat such as Uber and Delaware Express. Members agreed to do so. Goal is to find a venue that is convenient for all members and participants. Also, the council members were asked if they would be willing to share rooms for overnight stay should funding become available. Resource Plan: VRAC has a resource plan in place. Awards going forward require prior approval. This type of event could be funded through federal grant. Sonya Lawrence is looking for clarification regarding improved resource plan. She asks why prior approval is required. And does every activity require prior approval.

Mr. McAllister will send out the proposed agenda which was sent to our federal partner. It is representative of the 2017 agenda. Need upgrades or updates to the agenda by the end of the week so it can be revised in a timely fashion. We need time to inform the public of the town hall meeting. As in the past we will bring in other agencies such as DART, DOE and the Secretary's Office. Also hoping to add the VA, Social Security Administration as well as potential employers.

Were action items followed up after 2016 retreat?

Strategic Planning Workstreams: To be held in August, 2018. Conference call will be scheduled to discuss action items. Council needs to attend follow-up workstreams.

Andy and Olu are supposed to schedule a follow-up meeting.

Strategic Planning Meeting: DVI held a strategic planning meeting. Various focus areas were determined. AT, funding, transition and senior services are having follow-up meetings.

There are two new council members. Ms. Jacqueline Poquette, Human Resources Specialist and voting member and Ms. Patricia Burrell, DVI/VR for six years background is working with the Department of Labor for 20 years and a non-voting member.

Need to focus on vacancies in VRAC and attempt to find new members with the help of DVI. Also look for members at the public meeting, at conferences, other boards as well as parents as possible candidates.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS:**

Follow-up meeting to Healthy Eyes Summit. Diane Delaney is spearheading meeting. To be held February 16, 2018 at DuPont deNemours. Documents were sent for this meeting. Mr. Kevin McAllister and Mr. Darryl Garner will attend. Medical professionals and the community will also attend. Want to hone in on activities and actions from the last meeting. Ideas include prevention of eye disease and

increased resources. Panel right after lunch will include the Division of Aging, DVI and medical professionals.

Joint Finance Committee: February 20, 2018 at 11:30 am. Made up of legislators. Great opportunity for consumers and parents of consumers to talk about their needs. Anyone can give 2 minutes of testimony. Must write up testimony and make 18 copies or submit testimony to Mr. Kevin McAllister. As Chair of VRAC, Mr. McAllister has 3 minutes of testimony. Suggest arriving early to get a seat. They may not allow anyone to stand so you will need to get a seat to attend.

Training: Feedback is needed as to what training the council members feel they need. Also, suggestions for guest speakers are welcomed. Anything that can help elevate the VRAC will be welcomed.

2018 Advocacy Activities: February 16, 2018 is the continuation of the Healthy Eye Summit. February 20, 2018 is the Joint Finance Committee meeting. Opportunity in May for Healthy Eye Month. Will DVI coordinate for this? Vision to Learn at Dover Days. Good opportunity to engage the community and get to the people who do engage the community on a regular basis. Read Across America will be held March 9, 2018 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. This is a good way to get into the schools without all the red

tape. Target school is JPM Intermediate. Picked 2 fifth grade classes yearly. Sonya Lawrence will provide a list of schools with visually impaired students.

## **VI. ACTION ITEMS:**

Mr. McAllister is sending agenda for the retreat, information regarding the Healthy Eye Summit and Joint Finance Committee testimony to be submitted.

Ms. Sonya Lawrence will see if AT vendors can come to a VRAC meeting to talk about obtaining/maintaining employment. Microsoft to be invited as well.

## **VII. DVI/VR ADMINITRATIVE REPORT:**

As of February 9, 2018 there are 284 persons being served. We have a total of 10 individuals employed. The number of successful closures for 2018 is 0 individuals employed more than ninety days and 10 individuals that are currently employed for less than 90 days. There are 34 individuals that are ready to work. Finally, there are 78 individuals that are currently in training or a higher education program. Also, DVI-VR program has approximately 96 transition age students (age 14-21) and 118 transition age students (age 14-24).

Partnerships: Car Store Laurel/Salisbury, Wilgus Insurance, By the Book Financial Services, Strada Education Network and Creativespirit-us.org

Consumer Success Stories: One of our consumers has become a merit employee for the Division for the Visually Impaired. One of our returning consumers obtained employment as the Support Coordinator with Blindsight of Delaware. Her start date was February 6, 2018. Four of our transition students have registered for the Envision Summer week long camp in Kansas. The Envision program's "Heather's Camp" is an annual program designed to allow children and teens who are blind or visually impaired to experience the same exhilarating summertime activities as their typically sighted peers. Campers are from across Kansas and other states around the nation. The age range is from five to twenty. There is a one-to-one ratio of counselor to camper.

Transition Services: DVI is hosting an information session for families of children or youth ages 6-24 with blindness and visual impairments. We plan to discuss frequently asked questions about education, assistive technology, independent living services and vocational rehabilitation services. Attendees can call in on conference line or attend in person. This session is scheduled for February 13, 2018 from 6:00 p.m to 8:00 p.m. at the Biggs Building or by teleconference. Teleconference number is (302)526-5475, conference ID# 13211238.

DVI will also be hosting spring break activities April 2, 2018 through April 6, 2018 in New Castle County and Milford

State Service Center. Some activities will include participating in independent living activities, career development and learning how to travel independently.

Beach House is scheduled for May 18, 2018 through May 20, 2018. Planning for this event has started and the Education Program is taking the lead.

Mission Transition will take place on Monday June 25, 2018 through Friday June 29, 2018 at 2 p.m.

Summer Academy: Activities are being planned by VR, Education and Independent Living Services. Activities include career development, independent living activities and more. The summer activities are scheduled for July 16, 2018 through July 20, 2018. These activities will take place in the Biggs Building and the Milford State Service Center from 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

## **VIII. DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Kevin McAllister wants to understand the DVI numbers and statistics better. Need to give council a chance to look at and understand the data as well as changes from report to report. After the changes put forth by the DOE does the number of 284 need to change? Has VR gone back to see if individuals who have been denied services possibly are now eligible for services? Council needs to look at gains,



common measures, quality of service and how an individual is moving along in the program. How do we best provide services to these individuals? Is eligibility criteria specific to the education program? WIOA offers free employment services despite eligibility. How many students are on the registry at 14-21 vs. how many are potentially eligible? Why are these people not being served? Good talking point for VRAC.

Partnerships: How does DVI define partnerships? Agencies that DVI has made contact with and developing partnerships, existing partnerships and working to develop new partnerships. Good talking points are engagement and courting an organization. Introducing ourselves. Partner with Department of Education and other state agencies. Partnership does not necessarily mean outcome.

**DEB BRADL:**

There is a natural process to DVI. Introduction, training, job ready, less than 90 days employed, successful closure. Students often move status during the school year. VRAC wants to understand how individuals are moving through the process. VRAC wants to see compliance numbers and look at individual cases. What is “ready to work”? How long do they stay there? Do their goals match the opportunities available? Are there medical reasons for staying in this status? DVI is looking to re-define “ready to

work”. Asked DVI to report on statuses to get better engagement between VRAC and DVI. VRAC wants to understand statistics to see how VRAC can help move this forward. Mr. Darryl Garner mentioned that if VRAC gets the numbers they can put them in play for other things. The missing numbers are how many are eligible for services vs. those receiving services.

Deb Bradl reports that last Friday DVI held a sensitivity/orientation training with Goodwill. Trying to develop training programs for youth. Goodwill requested more information regarding how to work with DVI. We let them know what services we provide. Orientation and Mobility presented sighted guide training. Ricky Brown brought assistive technology and gave these individuals an idea what it is like to be visually impaired. Transition counselors presented WIOA rules and getting more opportunities for transition students. This led to a conversation regarding what a training program would look like. Agreed to work together to provide opportunities to students. In the development phase of contract and training program. We are doing a contract of services with Goodwill.

## **IX. BEP:**

Health Vending Machines Initiative: Vending machines now have 40% healthy options. A 12% increase in sales has occurred. This may be due to the fact that the machines

now accept debit/credit cards. BEP is treading lightly so as not to impact incomes of those servicing these machines. The American Heart Association has an initiative to make all vending machines at least 40% healthy options.

X. **DELAWARE INDUSTRIES FOR THE BLIND:**

Stopped taking orders. Finalizing orders now for US Geological Survey. Industries for the Blind has purchased the stock that was left over from previous orders. 45 days until the program is completely closed.

XI. **OUTREACH:**

Orientation and Mobility specialists took their show on the road. They did a sensitivity training with training cadets at the New Castle County Police Department for diversity training purposes. DVI Education video was released. It is on the DVI website. The video has gotten some views and shares so it is moving in the right direction. There is talk of how to develop this video for YouTube. This is the first video of a series. Currently developing video for families and educators.

There is a 2 week summer academy. Blindsight of Delaware has offered to help work on the agenda and possibly host the event.

Low Vision Clinic: The Mobile Low Vision Clinic will be in Kent/Sussex Counties 1 times per month beginning March 16, 2018.

Independent Living Services: Caregiver Session in collaboration with Blindsight Delaware to be held February 22, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Education team is kicking off activities. This past Friday students met regarding student council. They are currently working out plans and selecting officers.

Parent Group: To be held March 2, 2018 at elementary school in Milford. Offering activities for parent/students.

XII. **ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Healthy Eye Summit Friday February 16, 2018 @ Dupont DeNemours.

Joint Finance Committee Tuesday February 20, 2018.

Retreat potential dates: March 16 & 17, 2018 or March 23 & 24, 2018.

Read Across America: March 9, 2018.

Shirley Bryson will send a list of activities to include Information Session February 13, 2018.

XIII. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Kevin McAllister adjourned the meeting at 11:58 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Edmondson